# Lesson 24 Matthew Chapter 23-24 Denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees

Life in Christ: When did you feel closest to Our Lord this week?

1. A. Practically, this whole chapter is a denunciation of the Pharisees. In vs 1-10, what verse do you think summarizes Jesus’ issue with them? Why?

Matthew 23:1-10

1 Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples,

2 saying, “The scribes and the Pharisees have taken their seat on the chair of Moses.

3 Therefore, do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you, but do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice.

4 They tie up heavy burdens [hard to carry] and lay them on people’s shoulders, but they will not lift a finger to move them.

5 All their works are performed to be seen. They widen their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels.

6 They love places of honor at banquets, seats of honor in synagogues,

7 greetings in marketplaces, and the salutation ‘Rabbi.’

8 As for you, do not be called ‘Rabbi.’ You have but one teacher, and you are all brothers.

9 Call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven.

10 Do not be called ‘Master’; you have but one master, the Messiah.

B Vs 8-10 contain three prohibitions which Catholics seem to violate routinely. We have all had teachers in school, we all had fathers, we refer to our priests as “Father,” and many of us earn masters degrees. Jesus seems to be referring to something more significant than our casual use of these terms. St Paul also makes reference to earthly fathers even in a spiritual sense. Consider Philemon 10-11 and 1 Corinthians 4:15. What do you think that Jesus is prohibiting in vs 9; what are we not attributing to those we call, “father?”

Philemon 10-11

10 I urge you on behalf of my child Onesimus, whose father I have become in my imprisonment,

11 who was once useless to you but is now useful to [both] you and me.

1 Corinthians 4:15

15 Even if you should have countless guides to Christ, yet you do not have many fathers, for I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

C How is the 1 Corinthians reference precisely why we refer to our priests as “Father?”

1. Jesus accuses the Pharisees of worry over small acts of faith, such as tithing from the window herb garden, while ignoring the major issues. Note swarming insects such as gnats, were considered unclean as was the camel. In vs 25-26, Jesus is using ritually clean dishes as a metaphor for the heart, the seat of the will and the conscience. He is not really talking about dishes. In vs 27-28 Jesus is not talking about tombs, but making an apt comparison with a tomb full of physically dead bones to a physically living man who is spiritually dead inside. What are the weightier things that must really be clean and living and what are they really missing for the judgment for eternal life?

Matthew 23:23-26

23 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You pay tithes of mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier things of the law: judgment and mercy and fidelity. [But] these you should have done, without neglecting the others.

24 Blind guides, who strain out the gnat and swallow the camel!

25 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You cleanse the outside of cup and dish, but inside they are full of plunder and self-indulgence.

26 Blind Pharisee, cleanse first the inside of the cup, so that the outside also may be clean.

27 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You are like whitewashed tombs, which appear beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and every kind of filth.

28 Even so, on the outside you appear righteous, but inside you are filled with hypocrisy and evildoing.

1. Jesus is prophesying about the Apostles, disciples, and teachers who will go out to the towns throughout the Roman Empire. Gehenna was the garbage and sewage dump of Jerusalem where putrid refuse was burned. The smoldering, smoky, stench was often used as a euphemism for Hell. What will happen to many of the Apostles and early Christians after the death and Resurrection of the Lord at the very hands of the religious leaders He is speaking to? Name some names.

Matthew 23:33-36

33 You serpents, you brood of vipers, how can you flee from the judgment of Gehenna?

34 Therefore, behold, I send to you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and pursue from town to town,

35 so that there may come upon you all the righteous blood shed upon earth, from the righteous blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.

36 Amen, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

Chapter 24

The Temple destruction that occurred in 70 AD was foretold by Jesus and is mentioned by all three Synoptic Gospels. One of the purposes of the Revelation of John is to describe, often in symbolic, apocalyptic language the actual destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

Jerusalem and the Temple had been destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 BC because of the idolatry of the people led by unfaithful kings, the worst of whom was Manasseh, who placed idols in the Temple and practiced human sacrifice. See 2 Chronicles 33:4-7 and 2 Kings 21:11-13. After the return from the Exile and the rebuilding of the Temple, the Greeks would come and place their idols in the Temple but would be driven out by the Maccabees. Finally, in our Lord’s day and after, the Romans would come and place their Roman eagles in the Temple. The Greeks had desecrated the Temple by force, but the Roman conquest was abetted by Herod the Great. The Herodians along with the Sadducees were the collaborators with Rome.

1. A. Why do you think Jesus warned people not to return to their houses, vs17-18, but flee to the mountains?

Matthew 24:1-2, 15-21

1 Jesus left the temple area and was going away, when his disciples approached him to point out the temple buildings.

2 He said to them in reply, “You see all these things, do you not? Amen, I say to you, there will not be left here a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down.”

15 “When you see the desolating abomination spoken of through Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

16 then those in Judea must flee to the mountains,

17 a person on the housetop must not go down to get things out of his house,

18 a person in the field must not return to get his cloak.

19 Woe to pregnant women and nursing mothers in those days.

20 Pray that your flight not be in winter or on the Sabbath,

21 for at that time there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will be.

2 Chronicles 33:4-7

4 He built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said: In Jerusalem shall my name be forever;

5 and he built altars to the whole host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.

6 It was he, too, who immolated his children by fire in the Valley of Ben-hinnom. He practiced soothsaying and divination, and reintroduced the consulting of ghosts and spirits.

He did much evil in the LORD’s sight and provoked him to anger.

7 An idol he had made he placed in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to his son Solomon: In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I shall set my name forever.

2 Kings 21:11-13

11 “Because Manasseh, king of Judah, has practiced these abominations, and has done greater evil than all that was done by the Amorites before him, and has led Judah into sin by his idols,

12 therefore, thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I am about to bring such evil on Jerusalem and Judah that, when any hear of it, their ears shall ring:

13 I will measure Jerusalem with the same cord as I did Samaria, and with the plummet I used for the house of Ahab I will wipe Jerusalem clean as one wipes a dish, wiping it inside and out.

B The Jewish historian, Josephus wrote that 1.1 million Jews died in the siege and destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. But, the Christians heeded the Lord’s warning and no Christians were killed. Do you think this fulfilled the Lord’s prophecy in vs 2 and 21?

1. A. In every age, with every war and calamity false prophets proclaim the work of the anti-christ and “the end is near.” How do you think that Christians will know that the “end of the age” has indeed come and what should be our attitude?

Matthew 24:3-14

3 As he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples approached him privately and said, “Tell us, when will this happen, and what sign will there be of your coming, and of the end of the age?”

4 Jesus said to them in reply, “See that no one deceives you.

5 For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and they will deceive many.

6 You will hear of wars and reports of wars; see that you are not alarmed, for these things must happen, but it will not yet be the end.

7 Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be famines and earthquakes from place to place.

8 All these are the beginning of the labor pains.

9 Then they will hand you over to persecution, and they will kill you. You will be hated by all nations because of my name.

10 And then many will be led into sin; they will betray and hate one another.

11 Many false prophets will arise and deceive many;

12 and because of the increase of evildoing, the love of many will grow cold.

13 But the one who perseveres to the end will be saved.

14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the world as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come.

1. A. Vs 36 is a difficult verse, because Jesus is inseparably man and God, therefore, there is nothing that is not known to Him. But, Jesus also knows human nature. How would His disciples react if He told them the exact day and hour of His Second Coming? How would you react? What would be the problem of these reactions? Consider vs 42 and Luke 12:16-20

Matthew 24:36-44

36 “But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

37 For as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

38 In [those] days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day that Noah entered the ark.

39 They did not know until the flood came and carried them all away. So will it be [also] at the coming of the Son of Man.

40 Two men will be out in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left.

41 Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left.

42 Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come.

43 Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour of night when the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not let his house be broken into.

44 So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.

Luke 12:16-20

16 Then he told them a parable. “There was a rich man whose land produced a bountiful harvest.

17 He asked himself, ‘What shall I do, for I do not have space to store my harvest?’

18 And he said, ‘This is what I shall do: I shall tear down my barns and build larger ones. There I shall store all my grain and other goods

19 and I shall say to myself, “Now as for you, you have so many good things stored up for many years, rest, eat, drink, be merry!”’

20 But God said to him, ‘You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?

B What does it mean to “be prepared” in verse 44?

1. This short parable adds further explanation to question 1. Who are the characters?

Matthew 24:45-51

45 “Who, then, is the faithful and prudent servant, whom the master has put in charge of his household to distribute to them their food at the proper time?

46 Blessed is that servant whom his master on his arrival finds doing so.

47 Amen, I say to you, he will put him in charge of all his property.

48 But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is long delayed,’

49 and begins to beat his fellow servants, and eat and drink with drunkards,

50 the servant’s master will come on an unexpected day and at an unknown hour

51 and will punish him severely and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.

* Who is the Master? Who are the household?
* Who are the servants in Jesus time? Who are the servants today (especially those who are “distribute to them their food at the proper time?”